

disliked “politics in the pulpit,” he felt the use of the clergy was an important tool when in a campaign that threatened the “very foundations of our social order and morality.” Simmons also understood the usefulness of women in campaigning and included ladies at every opportunity.⁴¹ The WGU recruited women members. As visual reminders of the responsibility of white men to protect them, women were invited to attend and even speak at political rallies—uncommon occurrences in North Carolina politics up to that point. Other women participated in parades, fashioned banners for the cause, and cooked quantities of food for rallies.⁴² Simmons carefully orchestrated the campaign, opening discussions through printed media and a few speeches in late summer followed by fall speechmaking spectacles with parades and feasts in the last five weeks of the campaign.

Republican Reaction

After the Republicans and Populists realized the futility of working separately against the Democrats, they weakly fused their parties late in the election season but were ineffective in combating the well-organized Simmons machine.⁴³ Republican and Populist leaders watched the Democrats gain steam but failed to organize themselves, scheduling few speeches and lacking a cohesive, strong print campaign. Russell warned his compatriots that they were in a “fight for our lives” because a “Democratic Legislature here means an orgy of devilry the like of which has not been



Unidentified Wilmington woman, probably used as propaganda item. At the top of the photo was written “1898 riotess.” An image of woman in a pure white dress, armed with a pistol and holster at her hip plus a rifle at her side could have been a powerful image for Wilmington men. If white women were willing to take up arms in their defense, so should their men. There are two almost identical images of this woman in the Bonitz collection.

seen.”⁴⁴ Butler and other Populists reacted to the Democratic campaign by pointing out that the Democratic Party speakers did nothing but “howl ‘nigger’ from one end of the State to the other, hoping under the cover of the negro cry, to get men elected to the legislature” who would place corporate interests ahead of the needs of the average citizen.⁴⁵

African American Republicans also feared the outcome of the Democratic Party

⁴¹ R. L. Watson, “A Political Leader Bolts – F. M. Simmons in the Presidential Election of 1928” *North Carolina Historical Review* (October 1960):529, 539.

⁴² Glenda Gilmore, *Gender and Jim Crow: Women and the Politics of White Supremacy in North Carolina, 1896-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 98-99.

⁴³ Edmonds, *Negro and Fusion Politics*, 143.

⁴⁴ Daniel Russell as quoted in Crow, *Maverick Republican*, 126.

⁴⁵ *Caucasian* (Clinton), September 22, October 27, 1898 as quoted in Crow, *Maverick Republican*, 127.